



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## CICERONIAN AFTERTHOUGHTS

---

BY EVAN T. SAGE  
University of Pittsburgh

---

Among the minor tragedies of existence there is one that occurs sooner or later to every one of us. Today I read a paper or I respond to a toast or I engage in a debate; tomorrow there will inevitably come to my mind the decisive argument, the brilliant epigram, the crushing retort that would have made my feeble effort a complete success if I had thought of it in time. But if I be well advised, having made my speech today, I shall wait until tomorrow's inspirations have arrived before I write it out, I shall incorporate them in my manuscript, and posterity will never know the difference. I have sometimes wondered how much of Cicero's success in his various altercations was due to the fact that he had in this way the last word.

I am concerned today with a similar problem, though on a somewhat larger scale. In a recent paper<sup>1</sup> I called attention to a discrepancy between Cicero's conduct in a certain particular and his later descriptions of that conduct, and suggested an explanation. Now I wish to add some further examples of the same kind, and to elaborate the explanation.

Few things in Cicero's life have been so much discussed, and with such different results, as his political position before his election to the consulship. I shall not go into the details of the debate, because almost universally one fault has been committed: students have failed to see that an analysis that would be true of one period of Cicero's life may not apply at all to another time, while the evidence drawn from one group of Cicero's works may contradict that derived from another. Scholars have been altogether too much inclined to draw their conclusions from evidence of one kind or from one time. We are accustomed to think that the letters afford the best testimony to Cicero's real opinions, but for this purpose they fail us, as there are few letters of earlier date than the consular campaign, and letters of a later

<sup>1</sup> The Senatus Consultum Ultimum, C. W. XIII, 185 ff.

date can not be trusted. Tyrrell and Purser (Correspondence of Cicero, I<sup>3</sup> 8 ff.), in their attempt to prove that Cicero "never coquetted with democracy" refer to his warning (*Cluent.* 139) against taking as real expressions of opinion his statements in his legal orations, and therefore conclude that there is nothing to be inferred from the fact that he attacked Verres and defended Roscius and Cornelius and thought of defending Catiline. But Cicero's warning against accepting his public utterances occurs in a public utterance, and therefore impeaches itself. I am however willing to balance, for the present, the prosecution of Verres and the defence of Fonteius, the attacks on Catiline and the defence of Sulla and Caelius. There still remains, however, a substantial body of evidence indicating that before the consular campaign of 64 B.C. Cicero belonged to the democratic party. This evidence, briefly stated, is as follows: (1) In the letter in which he speaks of defending Catiline (*Att.* I.2.1) he calls Catiline his *competitor* and the use of the word shows that the orator was thinking of politics and the practical advantage of having Catiline under obligations, i.e., of making political capital out of the trial. (2) Cicero was an eques, and the traditional policy of that order, since the time of C. Gracchus, had been anti-senatorial. It would have been natural for Cicero to follow that policy in his younger days. (3) Cicero's youthful enthusiasm for his fellow-townsmen Marius, expressed later also in his poem on the great democrat, suggests the same thing. (4) His support of the Manilian Law was doubtless intended, though he denies it, to make him co-heir with Pompey of the popular favor. (5) As late at least as 65 B.C. Cicero himself expected that the senatorial party would oppose his candidacy (*Att.* I.2.2). (6) The author of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* (4.14 and elsewhere) is sure that the nobles will be cold toward Cicero, partly on account of his overtures to Pompey and partly on account of his *novitas*, and recommends that Cicero use every means to overcome this prejudice. If this is a genuine work of Q. Cicero, as many scholars believe (Tyrrell and Purser among them), its evidence is practically conclusive; if not, its value will depend on the date and the authorship of the work. An examination

of these questions is impossible here. (7) Sallust (*Cat.* 23) says that the senators were not well-disposed toward Cicero, but finally came to support him as the best of a poor lot of candidates, to beat Catiline, though they thought that the consulship would be polluted by the election of a *novus homo*. These facts, converging as they do, seem to me to establish the conclusion that down to his consulship Cicero was generally regarded as a member of the democratic party. Of course this general opinion may have been wrong, but their opportunities for observation were better than ours, and we may accept their conclusion. Cicero was of course a moderate by temperament and training. In later times we hear much of his admiration for the aristocratic state of Scipio and Laelius, but we must not date back that feeling. In the light of the evidence I have assembled it seems more likely that there is after all some political significance in his legal speeches, but this can not be pressed too far. (These speeches are considered in their political bearing by Heinze, *Ciceros Politische Anfänge*, in *Abh. d. kgl. sächs. Ges.* XXVII. 947 ff., but with a different result. Heinze's conclusions have not been universally accepted.)

It is certain that from his inauguration on Cicero acted as the champion and spokesman of the senatorial party. As such he promises to restore the senatorial supremacy, and as such he functions in the debate over the agrarian measures of Rullus, in the trials of Rabirius and Murena, and in the conspiracy of Catiline. There may be a reflection of criticism in Cicero's harping in the earlier speeches of the year on such phrases as *consul vere popularis*, with which he tries to make himself and others believe that there had been no change in his status.

If my account of Cicero's political career be correct, we must ask how Cicero could say to himself, as he does in his poem *de consulatu suo* (quoted as an argument against his joining what later was known as the first triumvirate, in *Att.* II.3.3):

Interea cursus quos prima a parte iuventae  
Quosque adeo consul virtute animoque petisti,  
Hos retine atque auge famam laudesque bonorum.

Such a claim appears to contradict all the evidence I have cited

regarding Cicero's political affiliations, and therefore needs explanation. It should be said that few scholars have used this bit of rhetoric as serious argument, but as a psychological if not a political problem it is interesting, and as such I wish to consider it. I have no desire to repeat the strictures of Dio, Mommsen, and others, that Cicero had no political principles. He did have them, and they were genuine and real, but they were not always the same. Yet here Cicero claims that he had never wavered in his allegiance to the *boni*. Conceivably Cicero means by *boni* merely conservatives, but its use as a political technical term is so general that, especially in this context, there is no reason to take it otherwise. I differ from most scholars who recognize a change in Cicero's political position in attributing to him no inconsistency or insincerity, and shall later attempt to justify my opinion. A somewhat similar situation may be seen in his explanation of his allegiance to Pompey and Caesar in a speech of 54 B.C. (*Planc.* 93), where he says that Caesar is applauded by the senate *cui me semper addixi*. In both cases, I believe that Cicero was perfectly sincere, and that he believed that he was telling the exact truth about himself. Sometimes he must have realized, or have been made to remember, that the evidence contradicted his professions, and this realization, plus the recent convert's missionary zeal, may explain the unnecessary brutality with which he treats plebeian and democratic leaders in his rhetorical and philosophical works, where political censure was out of place. (Among many such passages I may refer to *de off.* II.43; *de sen.* 11; *Brut.* 103; *de or.* I.38; *Tusc.* V.55. A complete collection of such passages will reveal some interesting things.) How easily Cicero could make himself believe what he wanted to believe may be seen in his claims that he went into exile not from any fear of Clodius but to avert the destruction of his country (*post red. in sen.* II.3; *de domo sua* 96; etc.), and these claims, contradicted though they are by his private letters, seemed true to him as they were made. How highly developed was this power may be seen from the remark which he made to Atticus after his return: "cognoram enim, ut vere scribam, te in consiliis mihi dandis nec

fortiorem nec prudentiorem quam me ipsum" (*Att.* IV.1.1), and perhaps frankness here as elsewhere verges on insult.

Before passing on, I wish to repeat my statement that I charge Cicero with no inconsistency or insincerity. The sincerity of his later belief in an aristocratic, if not an oligarchic, state may be seen not only in the pictures of the ideal commonwealth which he paints in the *de republica* and elsewhere, but concretely in his choice of members of the Scipionic circle as interlocutors in his political dialogues, in his debate whether the tribunate had really been a good thing for Rome (*de legg.* III. 19 ff.), in the longing for the past seen in the *Somnium Scipionis* and elsewhere, and in his proposal to Pompey for an alliance between them after the fashion of Laelius and Scipio (*Fam.* V.7.3). Zielinski (Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte<sup>2</sup> 5 ff. and elsewhere) maintains that Cicero derived his political ideas from the circle of Scipio, and for a later period this is true, but hardly for his earlier years, though as Heinze well points out (*op. cit.* 949), the ideal of patriotism may well have been transmitted thus to Cicero through Scaevola.

A somewhat similar change may be seen in his relation with the Atticists. Cicero himself admits that his style in youth had been excessively redundant and strained, though he hastens to add that his sojourn in Rhodes had cured him entirely of those faults (*Brut.* 316). This was evidently not admitted by everyone: Quintilian (XII.10.12 ff.) says that even some of Cicero's contemporaries dared to say that he was "unduly turgid, Asiatic, redundant, too much given to repetition and frigid witticism, feeble, diffuse and even effeminate," and Tacitus (*Dial.* 18) quotes similar criticisms originating with Brutus and Calvus, and therefore orthodox Atticist doctrine. Cicero himself feared that Atticus, influenced by his own name, would prefer for one purpose a more "Attic" style than that of Cicero (*Att.* XV.1 b.2). Cicero sometimes thinks of himself as belonging to the Rhodian school, which represents a reaction from the extreme Asianism, with Hyperides as chief model (Sandys, *Orator*, xliii). But nevertheless he approves many of the distinctive features of the Asiatic style; so, for instance, he says that the Asiatic orators are "non

contemnendi quidem, nec celeritate nec copia, sed parum pressi et nimis redundantes" (*Brut.* 51), and Hierocles and Menecles are "minime contemnendi; etsi enim a forma veritatis et ab Atticorum regula absunt, tamen hoc vitium compensant vel facultate vel copia" (*Orator* 231), and Cicero once complimented his rival Hortensius on the possession of these same qualities (*Quinct.* 8). It is obvious that Cicero regarded *copia* as the indispensable qualification of an orator, and was proud of his own powers in that direction (*Att.* XII.52.3). The standard by which Cicero is judging the Asiatic orators is of course Atticism, but he is clearly very charitable toward the qualities he mentions. Whatever his feeling toward Atticism, jeers at contemporary Atticists (Cicero would have called them pseudo-Atticists) are common. Thus he speaks of their inability to hold an audience and of their ignorance of what Atticism really means (*Brut.* 289; *Tusc.* II.3 and see below).

Despite this friendly attitude, theoretical and practical, toward Asianism, despite the admission of a youthful tendency toward the Asiatic style, we find Cicero in later life maintaining that he was, and apparently that he always had been, an Atticist. This enables him to turn the tables on his critics by showing that what they claimed, he had, and that what they had was merely a spurious imitation of the genuine. The process by which he arrives at this result is briefly this: *bene dicere* and *Attice dicere* may be regarded as synonyms. As Demosthenes is the greatest of the Attic orators, Atticism, says Cicero (*de opt. gen. or.* 13) is the imitation of Demosthenes. Oratorical greatness consists in the mastery of all of the three styles (*Orator* 101). Lysias and presumably his Roman imitators could use only the plain; Demosthenes could command them all, but the illustration that follows is taken not from the orations of Demosthenes but from those of Cicero himself. Cicero's claim is therefore that he is genuinely and in the best sense of the term an Atticist, and we may believe that the claim was sincerely made. When he was writing these essays (the purpose of the *de oratore* being debated, I have left it out of account), his career as an orator must have seemed to have come to an end, and once more his profession in

the present seems not to coincide with his practice in the past. Shall we say that Cicero was trying to mislead or to put the burden of proof on his Atticist critics by making them justify their claims to the possession of Atticism? The latter seems more nearly true. The later rhetorical works are of course partly controversial in character, but they display not only a defensive strategy, but also an offensive, in the claim that the real Atticism was that of Cicero, and not that of Brutus and Calvus. This is of course a quibble, but it seems clear that Cicero thought of himself as an Atticist, despite the evidence and the general belief to the contrary.

I am now ready to offer my explanation of the psychological phenomena I have been describing. Cicero had the kind of mind that not only permitted him but compelled him to believe what he wanted to believe. I repeat that this is no evidence of inconsistency, insincerity or instability of character. I see no sign of these qualities in his claim that he had followed the conservative path *prima a parte iuventae*. Cicero always saw things in their relation to himself. Whatever was most comfortable or convenient for him to believe was for the time being the truth, and this faculty seems to me to explain many of the apparent inconsistencies with which Cicero is charged. He could make himself believe that he had done what he later came to wish that he had done, and could base his subsequent conduct on that imagined behavior.

We are all familiar with Cicero's sensitiveness and his dependence on an atmosphere of pleasantness and approval. A student of physiognomy might easily find signs of this in his features. Equally familiar is his tendency to magnify that which was his and to depreciate that which was another's. It was then natural that he should wish and try to create this atmosphere of approval. He began, equally naturally, with himself, and thanks to his gift of accepting the second thought as his first, he had little difficulty in convincing himself that he was right. But his consciousness that there were other opinions, and his desire that other people should agree with him, would make him insist all the more upon the perfect reasonableness of his own position. The



very insistence would strengthen him in his opinion, until finally there was no room left for doubt. So often, for example, did he proclaim to himself, and perhaps to others, his loyalty to the conservative cause that he made himself at least believe that he had never had any other opinion. *Vires acquirit eundo* might be said of more things than rumor. The process I have described was an unconscious one. I see no attempt or desire to deceive any one or to falsify the record. If there is any deception, it was of himself, but innocently and unconsciously accomplished. The ability to hypnotize one's self may be a weakness, but it is no crime. Perhaps Caesar could not have done it, but we are dealing with another person and another type of mind and imagination, and part of the charm of Cicero is the fact that he is Cicero. It is natural enough to grow more conservative with increasing age, and it is equally natural to fail to recognize the change and to refuse to admit it. With all his self-consciousness and vanity, Cicero is natural.

Daudet tells us that in southern France the sun has a peculiar property. Not only can it magnify things that really exist, making a little bush into a mighty tree, but it can even render visible things that have no existence at all. In illustration he cites the case of a Provençal who was awaiting a consular appointment in interior China. He would tell his friends how the Tartars would come down on his post, and how then he would run up the consular flag and then bang! bang! out of the windows upon the Tartars! As he told the story over and over, each time with greater vividness and minuteness of detail, insensibly a transformation in his narrative occurred, until finally he told not how he would do these things, but how he had done them, despite the fact that he had never set foot outside his native land! Far be it from me to suggest that this amiable and imaginative gentleman was a liar. The simple fact is that the combination of temperament and environment was too strong for him, converting future tenses into past, and making him believe that he had done what he wished he had done. So too with Cicero, the combination of temperament and environment made Cicero believe that it was the senate and not the consul that executed Catiline's associates;

that he had always been a true Atticist; that he had always been devoted to the cause of the senate; and that he had gone into exile not from personal fear but to save the state. These claims, unwarranted as they may seem to less interested observers, were frank and genuine expressions of Cicero's opinion. He had the kind of mind that compelled him to think and say that he had done what he later came to wish that he had done, to accept his second thought as his first thought, and his afterthought as the only thought that he had ever had.